

**STATEMENT FOR HOUSE HEARING ON MARRIAGE LEGISLATION
COMMITTEE ON FAMILIES, CHILDREN, & SENIORS**

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This calendar year, (2015), as of date, I have personally met with over 70 couples whose marriages were either on the verge of major decline, separation, divorce, and some even experiencing affairs. So far 93% of these couples decided to move forward and work on their relationship; thus 5 couples decided to move forward in ending the relationship. You can multiply this by 13 years for an average of those I have cared for here in the context of the Church since coming to Michigan.

This should roughly reflect that when couples are given the opportunity for support, a greater probability of slowing divorce down in our community/congregation occurs. A high majority of the above couples that I have met this year alone, never had any pre-marriage, or marriage counseling work; this validates the need for marriage preparation, enrichment, and restoration of marriages in our communities. In most cases, if one of the spouses is willing to work on the relationship, more favorable are the results for that marriage to succeed with care and support.

This calendar year, we offered a marriage builders program in a group format for supporting marriage and had over 65 couples participate. I do not have figures of those who were struggling in their marriage before attending, but a majority of them were struggling.

This calendar year we have seen over 50 couples go through a pre-marriage program that consists of an 8-week course, mentoring, and intense screening interview. Since my settling here in Michigan (13 yrs. ago), we have had over 750 couples participate in a pre-marriage/re-marriage program, with an average of 7% later ending up in a divorce, or separation. These percentages run quite consistently through all our programs, and thus indicate that couples just need a safe place to process their differences, hurts, and receive proper guidance/preparation in having a successful marriage, instead of a quick release of the marriage covenant.

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